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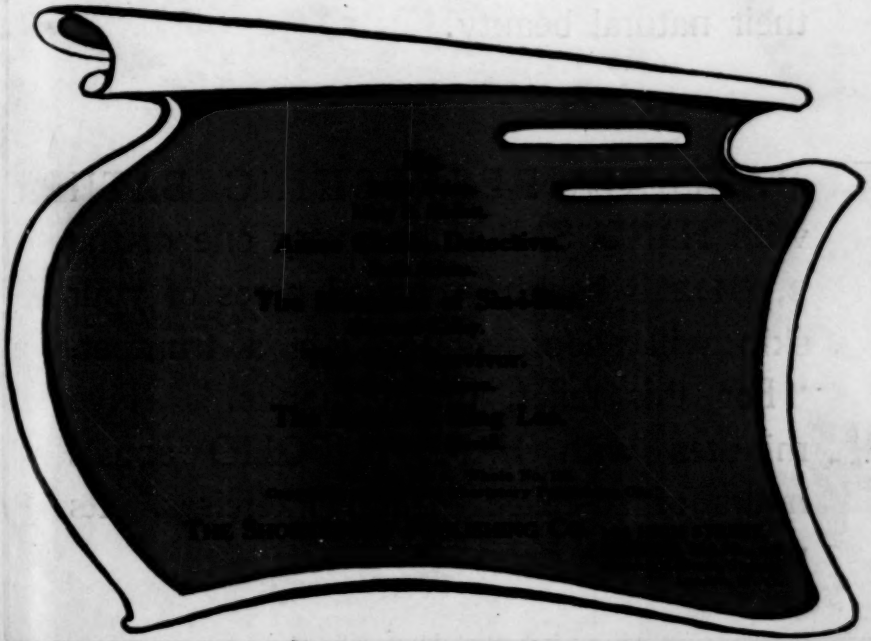

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The Black Cat

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BY MARY B. MULLETT.

EMMELINE was polishing the case for the artificial flowers, when the painter brought the new sign and called her out to inspect it.

The painter looked up inquiringly after a moment, as Emmeline stood staring silently at the bright gilt letters, which read:

> MILLINERY EMPORIUM.
> MRS. CLARK.

"It's very nice," she said faintly; "but the name ——"

"You didn't want your first name too, did you? I'd had to charge you more for that. Anyway, Mis' Clark, the spaces wouldn't ha' come out right. See?"

Measure in hand, the painter stooped in front of the sign, but Emmeline did not listen. In her mind was a hubbub of emotions, some fighting for, some against, a great invading impulse.

"The first name would spoil it," declared the painter, rising stiffly. "Don't you think so yourself?"

"I — I expect so."

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"Of course it would! Well, I'll send a man to put it up, ready for your opening."

The painter hurried off, lest she might develop some other criticism, and Emmeline went back into the shop.

At the age of fifty years and three months there was something indefinably girlish about Emmeline, something which, at the age of fifty years and one month, had not been there. Then Emmeline had been a derelict. She was now, so to speak, refitted and gliding into the water, bound for strange seas and the accumulation of much treasure.

All of Emmeline's life hitherto had been spent in an out-of-the-way corner of New Haven. Alone in her little house, she scarcely knew that the world was moving until it lifted her bodily out of its path. The city authorities shoved a street right at Emmeline and her home. When she stepped aside, it was with an increased bank account and a new ambition.

Why she went to Rayville only she, and one other person, ever knew. Almost immediately she hired a small frame building and announced that she would have a millinery "opening" in time for the Easter trade. Having thus thrown her banner to the breeze, she went "up to Buffalo," bought stock, took ten lessons in trimming — for which she had always had a knack — and returned feeling at least thirty years younger.

Fortified by the ten lessons and by the possession of twelve pattern hats, millinery had no terrors for her. With the assistance of two apprentices, she produced sundry other "creations," more or less reminiscent of the pattern hats, and awaited the opening with confident eagerness.

Trivial as the episode of the sign might seem, it had a decided effect on Emmeline. Going upstairs to the rooms where she did her rather light housekeeping, she groped for a chair in the darkened parlor. For a long time she sat staring before her, nervously pleating and unpleating the hem of her apron. It was only when one of the apprentices called her that she set her lips in a thin line of decision and went downstairs.

During a lull in the opening next day, a chipper little lady bustled in.

"Well, Mrs. Clark," she demanded, "have you a hat that will

make me look young and handsome? You don't know me, do you? I'm Mrs. Wilson, the Congregational minister's wife. I saw you at church last Sunday, and hope to see you often."

"Thank you," said Emmeline, in her pretty, old-fashioned way, "I've always been a church goer."

"Well, I hope you'll keep right on. If you can put up with Henry and me, you'll find the rest of the members all right. I must say though, Henry's worse than I am. The man was actually going to 'deal with' the Easter bonnet in his sermon.

"'Why, Henry!' I said. 'I was counting on getting one out of the wedding fees!'

"Of course the poor man saw his mistake, and I've come down to see what you can do for me for four dollars. It ought to be more. But the way our young people are neglecting matrimony is really sinful. Well, you and I have set them a good example and I suppose we can't do any more."

Emmeline turned abruptly to bring some hats to her customer, who sat down at the mirror, but continued her friendly talk.

"Speaking of marriage," she went on, "did your husband come with you?"

Emmeline turned away again, picking up a hat and carrying it across the room. When she came back however, she brought the same hat and placed it, crookedly, on Mrs. Wilson's head.

"He's dead," she said in a smothered voice.

"Oh, forgive me!" exclaimed the minister's wife. "Has he been dead long?"

Emmeline's face was stony.

"Yes," she said, after a pause.

"But one never gets over it, does one? You must forgive me for not thinking of it. I suppose it was because you were not in black."

"It——" Emmeline hesitated, then went on firmly, "It was his wish."

"That's just like Henry. But you have children, haven't you? You're not entirely alone?"

Emmeline turned once more, reached into the glass case for a parrot which was utterly irrelevant to the hat perched on Mrs. Wilson's head, regarded the bird absently, then put it back.

"No," she said, "I have no children."

As she looked down at the minister's wife her eyes filled with tears, through which shone a wistful, appealing look.

"Don't you think it must be hard to be all alone in the world?" she asked.

The new hat settled rakishly to one side as Mrs. Wilson impulsively grasped Emmeline's hands. But for the moment, neither of the women thought of millinery.

"Oh, I do!" said Mrs. Wilson tenderly. "Henry and I haven't any children, and it seems to me I couldn't live if he should die."

Emmeline disengaged a hand and wiped her eyes.

"There've been times when I thought I'd die too. Times," she added, "when I've *wanted* to die."

"I know. I don't blame you. Why, if Henry——"

Mrs. Wilson relinquished Emmeline's other hand and felt for her own handkerchief. For several minutes the two women struggled with their emotions. Finally Mrs. Wilson straightened the neglected hat.

"I ought to ask you to forgive me for bringing up sad memories," she said. "But I can't be as sorry as I should be if I didn't think it had brought our hearts very close together."

"It's done me good, I know!" said Emmeline.

"You poor dear! Your husband's death must have left you very lonely."

"More lonely than you could ever guess."

Emmeline stared out of the window, her eyes seeming to look at something immeasurably farther off than the main street of Rayville.

"You've no idea how careful he was of me. Many a time when I'd run into a neighbor's of an evenin', he'd come over after me, kind o' shamefaced; he was so anxious — or mebbe just lonesome."

Emmeline's eyes were bright now and a pink flush had crept into her wrinkled cheeks.

"And generous!" she went on. "My, but he was generous! If I hadn't set my foot down, I guess he'd brought me home something every day of my life. Why — stingy? He didn't know how *to spell the word!*"

"Just like Henry!" murmured Mrs. Wilson. "Henry would give me the clothes off his back if it would do me any good."

"So would *he*," said Emmeline eagerly. "And when I was sick he'd tend me like I was a baby. He'd even carry me upstairs. He was a big man an' I wa'n't no more than a featherweight to him."

Again Emmeline's lip quivered, and she had recourse to the damp ball her handkerchief had become. But after a little she put her sorrows firmly in the background and set the new "creation" straight on Mrs. Wilson's head.

"Well, it's done me good to open my heart to you," she declared, and there was a ring in her voice which confirmed her words. "This here is the prettiest of the pattern hats I got up to Buffalo an' it certainly is as becomin' to you as if it had been made right on your head. If you like it, Mis' Wilson, you can have it for four dollars. I'd love to give it to you out an' out, but I'm afraid you wouldn't let me."

"Indeed I wouldn't. As for four dollars, that's the next thing to it."

But Emmeline pleaded with such fervor that she almost fell to weeping again, and finally she said:

"Won't you let me do it in memory of — *him?* You see, you're the first person — in Rayville — that I've spoken to about him."

When Mrs. Wilson, hat box in hand, left the Emporium, she smiled a little to herself.

"I can't seem to imagine myself pressing a bargain in hats upon someone in memory of Henry," she thought, "but I can sympathize with the rest of the poor little woman's feelings."

And so both Emmeline and the Emporium were introduced to Rayville. Emmeline was the sole Congregationalist in the village who had taken to millinery, so the Emporium became quite a rendezvous for the ladies of that denomination. When the Easter rush was over they would drop in upon Emmeline and, by the hour, the tide of talk would roll on. Their "hired girls," their children, their husbands; that was the usual order of importance.

And Emmeline always took her part. When they talked of their ailments, she told what a marvel of strength and of gentleness "he" was in case of illness. Hired girls? She had never kept

one; "he" was so helpful about the house. Children? No, she had not had any — a sigh! — but "he" was devoted to children and they were always running after him.

In short, Emmeline always carried off the palm. For, whereas the other women often referred to the shortcomings of their respective lords, Emmeline's tributes were as flattering as extracts from an obituary notice. When Mrs. Deacon White said as much one day to Mrs. Wilson, that lady replied:

"But, my dear, that's just what they are, and I think it's lovely. I'm sure, if Henry were to die, I shouldn't admit — or remember — that he'd ever had a fault."

So the weeks and the months went happily by and people began to say to Emmeline:

"Well, Mrs. Clark, I guess our Rayville air agrees with you. You're getting younger every day."

In truth, Emmeline did not look like the same primly gentle, elderly woman she had been in New Haven. There she had seemed as if she would rustle at a touch, like a withered cornstalk or a branch of dead leaves. She was plumper now. Her eyes had more depth, her cheeks more color, her lips more fullness, her laugh more richness. Somehow or other the sap had climbed into Emmeline's being and renewed and invigorated her, body and spirit. The change had never struck Mrs. Wilson so forcibly as when she came into the Emporium one Friday morning in autumn.

"I wish I felt as cheerful as you look," she said with a sigh. "It's one of my crosses that Henry's always going off for over Sunday."

"*Ain't* it unpleasant!" exclaimed Emmeline. "I never could abide to have *him* go away — though I had to sometimes."

"Well, at any rate, you didn't have to have a strange man in the house while he was gone."

"Mercy, no!" cried Emmeline, quite shocked.

"Well, I do. Oh, it's only the 'exchange,'" in reply to Emmeline's puzzled look. "He's coming tomorrow. By the way, I wonder if you know him. He's the pastor of the Fifteenth Congregational Church of New Haven."

Emmeline's face suddenly turned gray. Her drawn lips moved, but no sound came.

"Girls," called Mrs. Wilson, running to the door of the work room, "a glass of water — quick!"

But when the glass came, Emmeline waved it aside.

"I'm better now. It's just — one of my old turns. I'm all right now, but I guess I'll go upstairs an' lay down. No, I don't need nothin'."

Emmeline went upstairs, but she did not "lay" down. She only sat motionless, staring with wide, terrified eyes at the chinks of light along the curtain edges. At noon, when the apprentices went home to dinner, she took her place in the shop again, her eyes full of newly taken resolve.

The next morning, Mrs. Wilson was rushing about, putting her house into a state of absolutely immaculate neatness and wondering how she was ever going to accomplish it before it was time to meet the train, when she saw Emmeline coming up the walk.

"Oh, dear!" she sighed. "I haven't time to stop for Mrs. Clark or anybody else."

But Mrs. Clark proved to be an angel in disguise. She had come, she explained, to see if she couldn't meet her old pastor at the train. And, if Mrs. Wilson didn't mind, she wanted to take him around to the Emporium for just a little visit before dinner. Dr. Hunt had been her pastor for years and ——

Emmeline rather broke down at this point, so that Mrs. Wilson had a good excuse for hugging her visitor almost as much as she wanted to; and when the Wilson horse jogged off to the station, Emmeline held the reins in her trembling hands.

How she replied to the minister's surprise and got him to the Emporium and through its glories and upstairs to the parlor were things of which Emmeline always had the vaguest recollection. Somehow she managed to do it, though it seemed to her as if it were taking years and that she should die, if she dared let herself, before it was over.

At last, though, he was there. A dear old man with white hair, kind eyes, shoulders which stooped as if he had spent a lifetime bending over the sick, lifting up the downcast.

"How cozy you are here!" he said. "I've often thought of you since you left New Haven and wondered where you were. You never sent for your church letter."

"Dr. Hunt," exclaimed Emmeline, putting his words aside with a desperate gesture, "I've got something to tell you. When I'm through — well, mebbe God will let you see your way to helpin' me. For if you don't ——" She broke off with a shiver.

"My dear sister," said the minister, with grave gentleness, "tell me your trouble if I can help you. It can't be as bad as you seem to think it is."

But when Emmeline had wrung the story from herself, her misery showing as plainly as if every word had been a drop of blood from her heart, the good man stood silent. He did not know what to do. Emmeline could read it in his face, and she clasped her trembling, wrinkled hands in an agony of appeal.

"Oh, Doctor — *must* you tell them? Is it so wrong for me to have done it? Where was the sin, the real *sin?* I ain't done nobody any harm. An' as for it's not bein' true, why, it's all happened *in my thinkin'!* Through those years after mother died, when father an' I was more like two shadows than like two human bein's, I kept a-pretendin' that I was livin' the life of other women — only better an' happier; that I had a husband like them — only a nicer an' a kinder one.

"An' after father died, what kept me losin' heart entirely there in that lonesome house? I wa'n't no hand to make friends till I come here, an' so I hadn't nothin' to do but to keep on a-pretendin'. And I tell you, Doctor, that *he* is as real to me as — as your wife's memory is to you. He's ben my comfort when I was in trouble an' my companion when I was well. An' this has been the happiest time in my whole life, because I could let it seem more real than ever. I suppose mebbe I'd a' gone crazy if I'd kept on the other way. Folks do lose their minds that way.

"But I didn't go to do it, Doctor. 'Twas just that mistake about the sign. Mebbe that's where I done wrong, but I don't know. When I seen that 'MRS.' on that sign, it seemed to me as if God had just opened a door to me an' said: 'Here, you poor creature! You've ben a-livin' in darkness for fifty years. You've ben as lonesome as anybody can be *an' live!* Now you can have some light in that life of yours an' you can have *somebody that belonged to you.*'

"Mebbe I made myself believe all that, Doctor. I don't know.

I don't want to put it off onto God if He didn't have no hand in it. Anyway," desperately, "I'll leave God out of it, an' still I can't see why it was so awful wrong. Tell me you think so too, Doctor; tell me you think so too!"

Emmeline's voice trailed off into pitiful sobs which shook her slender shoulders. Shook, too, the fibres of the good Doctor's heart and brought the tears to the gentle old eyes. Suddenly he whispered something to himself, and anyone watching him might have seen that it was: "Judge not, that ye be not judged."

"My daughter," he said: "I do not say that you have done well; but neither am I God, to judge how far the heart's truth excuses the questionable deed. At least you need not fear that I shall expose you to others, who may be less willing than I am to leave judgment to God."

Emmeline gave a low cry of relief and actually kissed his hand.

"Tut, tut!" protested the Doctor with a smile.

Emmeline blushed. She had a delicate prettiness in her eager gratitude, and the Doctor looked at her musingly.

"It is strange," he said, "that you never really married."

Emmeline looked up with a quaint dignity.

"There was a time, when I was a young girl — the young man left New Haven and," she smiled with a little wistful air of apology, "you'll never guess! He came here to Rayville. He died inside of a year. But when my home was sold, I felt ——"

"Ah!" said the Doctor. "I see."

The following Monday the church-supper committee met in the little parlor over the Emporium and, before proceeding to business, they naturally discussed the "exchange" of the day before.

"Well," declared Mrs. Wilson, in her usual brisk fashion; "next to Henry, I think Dr. Hunt's the dearest man I ever saw."

"Ain't he!" responded Emmeline, with enthusiasm. Then she added, with a little quiver in her voice: "There ain't a kinder human bein' drawin' the breath of life this day than Dr. Hunt! I — *he* an' I — owe him a good deal."

Amos Clubb, Detective.*

BY SWIFT ADAMS.

THE most striking thing in the appearance of Amos Clubb was his commonplaceness. His reddish hair, blue eyes and fair complexion all harmonized so peculiarly and completely that he seemed always to surrender his individuality to his surroundings. This was infinitely useful to him in his profession. Probably half of English-speaking New York had voiced his name. Not a dozen people in the town knew him by sight. He, with characteristic persistency and thoroughness, had made a study of Metropolitan humanity. The extent and scope of his ability to identify and classify people were amazing. The delicacy and ingenuity with which he had unkinked innumerable embarrassing and important problems had won for him a reputation as a consulting detective that was by no means confined to New York city.

One July morning, according to his invariable custom, he entered his office on East 26th Street at precisely half-past eight. As he stepped over the doorsill he gave an exclamation of surprise. Pacing up and down the room in considerable agitation was a young woman whom he instantly recognized as a daughter of a prominent family. For the purposes of this narrative she will borrow the patronym of Robinson.

"You are Mr. Clubb?" she asked, turning quickly at his entrance.

"I am he, Madam," replied the detective. "Please be seated."

"I suppose I owe you an apology for taking possession of your office in this unceremonious fashion," began the young woman, nervously plumping down into the chair he pushed toward her. "You see, I was very anxious to see you and I got here rather too early. I begged the cleaning woman to let me stay."

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"You did quite right."

"You may have guessed that it is an errand of importance that brings me here so early. At least, it's important to me. I have come to see you because I have been assured that your clients' interests are kept absolutely confidential, and because during the last three days I have had a most extraordinary experience."

"I am glad to say that you have been quite accurately informed concerning my business methods," replied Clubb. "And I shall be delighted to listen to anything you have to say."

"I have been very badly frightened," replied the young woman, who seemed more perplexed than disturbed. "Yet it isn't much of a story I have to tell. But I will describe what has happened to me, and I'll be as brief about it as I can.

"Tuesday morning I came down town to do some shopping. As I went into Blue's Broadway store I noticed that a man looked at me very closely. He was short, florid, and had a heavy brown beard. His eyes were hidden behind big goggles. Of course, I didn't notice all these things the first time I saw him. But subsequent events prompted me to look at him more closely."

"I quite follow you," said Clubb. "May I ask if you noticed his clothes?"

"Oh, they were dreadfully shabby — an old blue suit and a battered cap. I stayed in that store about half an hour. When I came out he was still loitering about the door. I got into my motor car and we went to Brown's. When we arrived there I was very much surprised to see lounging in front of the store the very same fellow. He turned away when I looked at him sharply."

"Probably passed you in an automobile," observed Clubb, regarding his client closely.

"But I'm sure that he didn't!" cried the young woman. "I naturally looked for an automobile, when I saw him there. There was none in sight and I'm sure I would have noticed him if he had passed me in one. When I came out of Brown's the chap was still there. I went to Green's for luncheon, and when I got out of my car, there he was again! I can tell you, Mr. Clubb, I was puzzled and just a little frightened. It was not only that he had followed me that perplexed me so. But how could he know just where I was going and how could he get there ahead of me every time? My

machine is unusually fast and my chauffeur is a daring one. Besides, I watched for him in all the automobiles I saw. Yet, how else could he pass me?

"I went home, and that was the last I saw of the fellow on Tuesday. But now he has played his extraordinary game for three days. I'm not timid, but I admit that this has made me dreadfully nervous. Last night the mystery of the thing became intolerable to me and I determined to see you the first thing this morning. And here I am."

As the young woman finished her story she leaned back in her chair with an air of relieved expectancy — as if she had shifted her burden to his shoulders, and was interested to see what he was going to do about it.

"You did quite right to come to me," said the detective, after a pause. "Your story is strange enough, and I imagine the chap has a definite purpose in following you. Yet I am not inclined to think, from your story, that his motive is a wrong one."

"I should hate to think so."

"Has any one ever annoyed you before?"

"Never."

"Pardon an impertinent question, but is there a — a disappointed lover, or anything of that sort?"

"No!"

Clubb rubbed his chin nervously. "I wish," he said, "that you would send up your chauffeur. I want to borrow his coat and cap. I have some things here he can wear home. I know something about motor cars — and I should rather like to get a glimpse of this singular fellow who so mysteriously follows, or shall I say, precedes you."

"I fancy you will have no trouble, then," replied his client. "I found him outside waiting for me when I came here this morning."

"You amaze me," said Clubb, springing to his feet. "Please send up your man at once."

When the detective stepped out of the elevator a few moments later he was a counterpart of the professional chauffeur who, a short time before, had entered it. His client, in her car, made a little motion toward a man lounging against the building. The

detective barely glanced at the fellow, and strode rapidly up to the car.

"Did you say Green's, Madam?" said Clubb, loudly.

Miss Robinson nodded quickly.

Clubb gave her an approving glance and climbed into the car. During the next five minutes he devoted himself silently to guiding the machine. As they approached the restaurant, Clubb turned to his companion.

"We will go in here," he said, "if you don't mind breakfasting with your chauffeur."

"Why, I don't mind in the least, if you really wish it," she replied. "Besides, there will be nobody there I know, this time of day."

"Good!" replied the detective. "Ah, I see our enterprising friend is here before us."

Clubb did not even glance at the fellow as they passed in. He led his client to a sheltered table and ordered a light breakfast.

"Now," said Miss Robinson, spiritedly, "please tell me when you intend doing something. You have barely looked at the man, and here we are wasting time."

"You think so?" replied Clubb.

"What have you accomplished? Why don't you — why, Mr. Clubb, the waiter is setting the table for three!"

"Exactly. I am going to have our eccentric friend to breakfast. Waiter, please take this note to that chap outside."

"For heaven's sake, don't be mysterious," cried the young woman. "If you have found out anything, tell me what it is."

"My dear young lady," replied Clubb, quietly, "this is not a mystery but — but here is our man. Let him speak for himself."

The stranger pulled his cap well over his eyes and reluctantly approached the table.

"What's wanted?" he demanded gruffly.

By way of an answer, the detective reached out, and with a quick jerk tore off the man's cap. With it came goggles and whiskers.

"Jim!" screamed the young woman, scrambling to her feet.

A smooth-faced, boyish-looking young man grinned at her sheepishly.

"Hello, Laura," he replied calmly.

The young woman, quite speechless, sat down again.

"You seem to know the gentleman," observed the detective.

"Know him!" she cried breathlessly, "he is my fiancé."

"Just so," replied the detective, smiling.

"Calm yourself, Laura," said the young man, pulling himself together. "I really haven't turned lunatic or anything of that sort, you know."

"But what on earth have you — you been trying to do?"

"I will explain," replied the young man. "But first I should like to ask who this gentleman is."

"He is not my chauffeur," said Laura, smiling. "Mr. Clubb, this is James Banks. Jim, shake hands with Amos Clubb, the detective."

"Good heavens!" exclaimed Jim. "You don't mean to say that you — that he is here on my account?"

"I do, indeed," replied Laura. "How was I to know you with those whiskers on? But go on, sir, and give an account of yourself."

"Well, I suppose I have rather made an ass of myself," began the young man. "It is like this. About ten days ago I had a dream that seemed so real that I remembered it perfectly when I awoke, and I seldom recall dreams."

"What was it?" inquired Laura.

"I dreamt that you had been robbed of your Wilson Golf Trophy."

"What! My lovely diamond watch?"

"Yes. Well, a night or two later I had the same dream again — only more realistic and vivid — and it was repeated a third time, within the week!"

"Why, Jim! I never knew you were superstitious!"

"Well, I knew that you wore that watch, Laura, and I made up my mind that you were liable to a personal attack."

"Why didn't you go to the police?"

"I wanted to shield you from any publicity, as well as from the humiliation of having a detective camping on your trail, and then, as you have so delicately hinted — there may be nothing in dreams."

"True," said the young woman. "Go on."

"Well, that's all," replied the young man. "You know the rest. I simply took the matter into my own hands. But I never dreamed that I would alarm you."

"But the idea that I shouldn't have known you," said Laura.

"Oh, I think my 'make-up' was rather clever. And now, sir," said Banks, turning to the detective, "I should like to know how you were able to penetrate my disguise when my sweet — when Miss Robinson was unable to do so."

"I will explain, with pleasure," replied the detective. "But first I should like to know why you left the motor-cycle out of your story?"

"How did you know I had a motor-cycle?" cried the young man.

The detective chuckled. "I had deduced the motor-cycle before I left my office this morning. Miss Robinson assured me that she had not seen you in an automobile. As a motor car is not very easily overlooked, I made up my mind that you had some other way of getting around. A motor-cycle instantly suggested itself as admirably suited to your purpose. Its small size would enable it to navigate among the vehicles and easily distance an automobile on a crowded street. As for finding out Miss Robinson's destinations, you used the absurdly simple plan of listening to her directions to her chauffeur."

"How stupid of me not to think of that!" cried the young woman.

"You have been anything but stupid in this affair," replied the detective. "Well, I immediately 'phoned a friend in the City Hall, who read to me the very small list of persons who had registered motor-cycles. When I heard your name, I at once recognized it as that of Miss Robinson's fiancé. This gave me a clew, though I confess I couldn't conjecture your motive. I fancy that note with your name in it rather gave you a start."

"It certainly did," replied the young man, admiringly.

"These explanations are very entertaining," said Miss Robinson, much amused. "But doesn't it seem absurd that all these things should have happened for nothing? All the time the innocent cause was right here." She put her hand to her breast.

Then, turning pale with consternation, she cried: "Oh, Jim, it's gone!"

"What!" The detective fairly shouted the exclamation. All sprang to their feet.

"My watch, it's gone — it's been stolen after all!"

Both men stood for a minute as if petrified. The detective spoke first.

"I can't begin to express," he said bitterly, "How chagrined and humiliated I am. You had the watch this morning. And to think that such a thing could have happened when I was with you —"

"No, no!" interrupted the young people. "We don't blame you. You had something altogether different to think about, and didn't even know there was any danger."

"I thank you for your kind words," replied the detective, rising. "But, nevertheless, I shall feel that my professional honor is stained, until I recover the watch. If you'll excuse me now, I'll go to my office and have a quiet cup of cold tea before I start on this second problem. Try it, in case you are ever in need of a mental tonic."

The Menelaus of Sin-i-Bar.*

BY ELLSWORTH KELLEY.

OUT of the pine and aspen trees that skirted Skidmore Hill a thin column of smoke was rising and pointing like a giant finger to the sky. It was in no wise a signal fire, except as the experienced eye might read in its smoke the location of a mining camp, and the further indication that the men had knocked off from work, and were now engaged in the more congenial task of preparing the evening repast of fried bacon, coffee, slap-jacks and beans, articles of diet that strongly appealed to the voracious appetites of men who daily delved with pick and shovel in search of pay dirt — a search that so far had proved distressingly barren of results — in the century-accumulated detritus along the banks and in the gravelly shallows of Sin-i-bar.

The screech of a wagon wheel, chain-locked, sent the echoes hallooing to each other, and startled into flight and querulous calling the jays and sparrow-hawks from their cover in the pine woods, and sent discordant challenge down to the attention of the group of miners just then engaged in washing from bronzed arms and faces the accumulation of red dust that daily turned them into images done in terra cotta.

Snub-nose Charley promptly offered to lay a wager with his partner on the probability of its being a prospective buyer coming down from Denver by bovine express. Snub-nose had an elastic temperament and a perennial hopefulness that was constantly anticipating the arrival of a man from Somewhere who would capitalize the diggings on Sin-i-bar and place on the market a property that would astonish and dazzle the eyes of the financial world with the richness of its color.

"I writ a agent up at Denver," he explained, confidentially,

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"that we have a shore thing down here. I writ him that all we need to make old Fair look like thirty cents is capital to develop the claims on this here Sin-i-bar. Cuss placer minin', anyhow! It's awful monotonous, is diggin' in a sand-bar fer a pocket full o' rocks, and never findin' any. I'd a heap ruther resk makin' a strike at faro! It's jest as shore, and not so physically debilitatin'. As I said, I writ a agent, and more'n likely he's sendin' down a buyer by bull-express, not wantin' to wait fer so slow and oncertain a means of conveyance as the Denver stage."

The glamour of Snub-nose's day dream was rudely dissipated as the creaking wagon emerged from the belt of pine trees at the foot of the Skidmore Hill. The wagon was drawn by a yoke of oxen so attenuated that they reeled as they walked. As they approached, Reddy audibly speculated on the entire improbability of their being able to stand alone when deprived of the mutual support of the ox-bow and wagon tongue. The oxen came to a halt before the group of men, and a mild-looking giant, with anxious blue eyes and yellow, curling hair, slowly clambered out of the wagon's front and saluted them.

"Ev'nin', pardners all! Might there be any objections to we uns campin' here?"

He spoke in a soft, drawling voice, an apologetic note in his words. The tone was such as one might use when he fears that, in addition to being an unexpected guest, he is also an unwelcome one. He coughed as he spoke, a little, hollow cough that hinted at incipient pulmonary trouble.

"You see we've druv a right smart ways, me and the little gal. She's in there!" He paused to make a gesture toward the wagon with his ox-goad. "We've druv a considerable ways, first and last, a-lookin' fer — someone. And not havin' found — someone — consequintly we're still travelin'."

The latter part of the statement was apparently directed to no one in particular. Certainly the miners were not his auditors. At mention of the little girl, the men promptly and with unanimous impulse, grouped themselves around the wagon front, Snub-nose and Reddy in the lead.

After a momentary hesitancy, due to a doubt as to what the age of the little girl might be, and a consequent delicacy about

gazing upon her charms uninvited, Snub-nose overruled his scruples, climbed upon the wagon wheel and peered cautiously into the cavernous depths of the wagon cover. The little girl stirred uneasily, awoke, sat up and returned Snub-nose's wondering gaze with the utmost gravity. Then, recollecting her parent, she demanded:

"What have you done wif my Daddy? I want my Daddy!"

"Daddy's here, darlin'. They won't hurt ye! They's miners, same as Daddy used to be!"

Snub-nose nearly fell off the wheel in an ecstasy of delight. "She kin talk, boys! Derned if she can't talk!" and he beamed a comprehensive and knowing smile upon the astonished group of men, who one and all shared Snub-nose's surprise and delight in the discovery that a little five-year-old girl had so early acquired the art of speech.

To further quiet the fears of the little girl, he audaciously and recklessly avowed that he thought more of little girls than of anything else on earth and, furthermore, regretted he did not have a hundred little girls of his own that very minute. This philoprogenitive avowal did not impress the rest of the men as at all excessive or incongruous. On the contrary, each and every man of them boldly assented to a similar feeling, notwithstanding that, only the evening before, in discussing the deplorable condition of the camp's finances, each and every one had agreed to a kindred feeling when Snub-nose had declared that he was condemnably glad he had no condemnable family dependent upon him — the luck had been so bad during the entire condemnably condemned season.

The man took advantage of a lull in these avowals of domestic sentiments to inquire of Snub-nose, tentatively:

"I don't s'pose, now, there's any — woman — in this here camp?"

No, there wasn't any woman in this here camp! What would a woman be doin' in this here camp? Tell him that. Yes, just tell him that! NO! There wasn't any woman in this here camp, never had been, and, so fer as he keered, never would be!

Parenthetically, it might be observed that the truculence of Snub-nose's answer was no doubt due to the memory of the short

but strenuous matrimonial experience which he had left behind him in the State of Iowa. Incidentally, he had left there, also, the partner of his matrimonial venture. He was not given to talking about this chapter in his life, though once he had, in a sudden burst of confidence, imparted to Reddy the startling information that if a man wanted to lead a life of "merry hell," he could find it by marrying a widow with property in her own right.

That night, under the glow and blaze of the stars in the cloudless, crystalline sky, and to the threnody of the night wind as it murmured through the pines and the shivering leaves of the aspens, the sojourner told his story to the group of listening men around the fire of pine boughs while he held the sleeping child.

"And so," he concluded, "so she left us. So she went off with a poker sharp as wored a big mustash and store clothes. She thought a power of Trotty, too. She was a little hard on me at times, but I always laid that to her havin' red hair. But she thought a heap of Trotty! W'y, oncet she waked up in the night a-cryin' and a-sayin' as how she had drempt that Trotty was dead! And she went — as I told ye — and we're a-goin' after her — to find her and — to fetch her back!"

Further conversation elicited the information that he had but an exceedingly hazy idea of her whereabouts. She might be in Helena, Manitou, Laramie, Salt Lake City. She might be in some obscure mining camp where her paramour might find good picking among men who sought to woo Fortune by the turn of a card. Wherever she was, he had faith sublime that he would find her and fetch her back.

"This is a funny old world," remarked Snub-nose reflectively, as he rolled into his blankets that night. "Here's me, that hez been shakin' in my boots, so to speak, fer nigh onto eight year fer fear my old woman would hit my trail and run me down. When I think of it, Reddy, I git weak in my knees and shake like I had the buck-ager. Sort of an all-gone feelin', you onderstand, like she war liable to turn up most onexpected. And here's *him*, on the trail of a wife that's stampeded, wantin' to rope her and lead her back! He's a fool for expectin' to do it, and a derned fool fer wantin' to."

This sentiment seemed so highly creditable to his feelings that he repeated it. Whereat, Reddy, recalling his college days, briefly recited to Snub-nose a synopsis of the Trojan war and the cause that led to it, and wound up by saying:

"So you see, the troubles of this wanderer is only a new edition of an old, old story. It's just a cheap, little paper-backed edition at that." Then, lapsing into the vernacular of the camp: "The only thing that fills me with a consoomin' curiosity is this: How does this here Menelaus as is camped on Sin-i-bar expect to overtake his Helen with a team of wored-out old bulls?"

To which Snub-nose responded, "Mennylayoos!—Name fits him to a T!" Then, somewhat irrelevantly, "My old woman had red hair, too!"

Menelaus did not depart the next morning nor, in fact, for many mornings thereafter. That very morning Reddy struck pay dirt at the very first blow of the pick. Snub-nose grasped the situation promptly and comprehensively. It was a plain, old-fashioned case of miner's luck if there ever was one. He detailed to the excited men the traditions of miners' luck at great length, and with appreciative emphasis. He touched on matters that were history of a comparatively recent date.

Didn't a strayed-off hoss bring the luck to old Bill Hall and show him the location of the Silver King? Didn't a runaway jackass bring the luck to old man Kellogg, and the discovery of the great Bunker Hill mine? It was a perfectly logical conclusion that the sojourners had likewise brought the luck to Sin-i-bar. It would be a wholly insane and preposterous thing to allow the luck to depart on the day of its coming without protest.

The men accepted Snub-nose's theory unquestionably and were unanimous in agreeing that the luck must be kept in camp at all hazards. Hardpan William suggested that, if force were necessary, their guests could be securely confined in the vacant cabin of Old Illinoy. He even made the brilliant suggestion that they could be fed through the hole in the wall that served the purposes of ventilation, and which was known by courtesy as the "winder." Hardpan was not usually credited with being fertile in resourcefulness, and this inspiration of his was pronounced by Snub-nose to be totally without precedent and entirely imprac-

ticable. The luck could only be detained by fair means, he said.

"Besides," said he, "Mennylayoos has already onderwent considerable, and sudden confinement might prove altogether too weakenin' to his system. As fer that little gal——" jest show him the cross between a ki-ote and a son-of-a-gun that would dast to ondertake it! Yes, jest show him. That was what he was here for! Then he volunteered to try what he termed *dip*-lomacy.

Menelaus was even then yoking his cattle, with view to making onward in his uncertain journey. Snub-nose approached him with an air of deep solicitude and pointed out the every evident fact that his oxen needed further rest, that he, the Menelaus, was jaded in appearance, and that the little girl was positively ill. Indifferent to the first two propositions, the third argument was all-convincing, and he consented to delay his departure for just one more day.

That evening Snub-nose again essayed the role of diplomat. He approached the subject cautiously, and with a fine assumption of deep disinterestedness. He was a representative of the boys only. He frankly said as much to show how clear he was of ulterior motive. Then he told Menelaus of the luck that had come to Sin-i-bar, and that the boys were all certain the visitors had brought it. In recognition of this valuable service, and as a testimonial of the high esteem in which they were held by the camp, he, Snub-nose, was duly and legally authorized and commissioned to present and make over to them, by word of mouth, an equal share in the diggings, man and man.

"Of course," said Snub-nose, as if it were an afterthought, "there is the further consideration that you stay with us and help work the dirt, man and man." Then, in response to the shake of the other's head, "And when you git ready to move on you'll hev a pocket full o' dust when you hike down the trail ag'in after your old woman. Lord, man! You kin bring her back in style!"

This view of the case struck Menelaus as worthy of consideration and, after some deliberation, of acceptance. The next morning he and Trotty moved into the cabin on the edge of the pines which Old Illinoy had vacated when he made his final trip over the range after a losing game with mountain fever. They proceeded at once to make it homelike. The floor was swept with

a besom of twigs, the bunk in the corner was supplied with a mattress made of gunny sacks and filled with dry, odorous pine needles, and the blankets were draped over it in conventional style.

That evening the men dropped in, ostensibly to make a friendly call, really to cultivate the acquaintance of Miss Trotty, whom they secretly regarded as the luck. She was delighted to see them, and delighted with her new home. It was so much nicer than living in a covered wagon. She was Daddy's little housekeeper now. She was going to learn to be a good housekeeper and cook, and when they found Mammy and fetched her back, Mammy wouldn't have a thing to do but fol' her han's an' look pretty! She smiled triumphantly up at Snub-nose, and Snub-nose stroked her hair and said, "Bless her sweet life!" and volunteered his opinion that she was a blessed little angel, so she was. Yes, sir, a blessed little angel.

Then Reddy took her, and made a trotting horse of his foot for her. He even essayed to break forth in song. The words came reluctantly at first, o'er shy from many years' neglect. Finally he coaxed from Memory the whole of Banbury Cross, which he sang over and over again to her. She gave expression to her appreciation in little, gurgling cackles of delight. The men listened greedily, and in fond and unaffected admiration of this hitherto unknown accomplishment of the scholar of Sin-i-bar.

But though, in the genial sunshine of Trotty's presence, the natural reserve of the bronzed and bearded men so far melted that they indulged in sundry reminiscences of by-gone days; though Snub-nose made a heroic but futile attempt at singing the touching old ballad of Barbara Allen; though Hardpan William told with great gusto his favorite story, himself the hero, of a poker game in which he had taken part when he was in Laramie in the winter of '83, a game in which he had held that mysterious poker hand known as a "lu-lu," to the surprise, disgust and undoing of the tenderfoot against whom he was playing; and of the utter humiliation of his opponent later in the game, having obtained a "lu-lu" hand himself, to find that according to an established rule of the house, but one "lu-lu" could be played in one night; though all this was done for the purpose of enticing

the mind of Menelaus away from his domestic troubles, to their great discomfiture they perceived that all had fallen on unheeding ears. When the last yarn was finished, he smiled feebly and remarked reflectively:

"As I said, I'm a-goin' to fetch her back, pardners all, and — I am!"

That summer was a Golden Age on Sin-i-bar — a Golden Age in a dual sense.

The later rains had ceased falling early in July, but the melting snow back in the range kept the shallow bed of the stream flooded until late in August. In the daytime the stream was a part of the rude industrial machinery of Sin-i-bar camp, and did its part in helping the men free the color from its less distinguished and aristocratic associates of the mineral kingdom. But during all the night hours it revelled as if on a holiday, and tirelessly murmured words of love at the feet of the pines and aspens and to the daisies sleepily nodding along its banks; or else, at the falls below, it shouted up to the stars of the glory of the peak of the Silver Plume and of the rugged beauty of the cañons through which it journeyed down to Sin-i-bar.

Day by day the men digged and delved, and toilsomely rocked the cradle at the margin of the stream. Day by day the hoard of dust and nuggets grew until Snub-nose was filled with a consuming fear that the man from Somewhere would put in tardy appearance and capitalize the diggings on Sin-i-bar against their wish and will. Day by day their belief in Trotty as the living embodiment of their luck grew apace. And they idolized her, not because of this belief, but because the best and most unselfish love of man is sometimes lavished upon a little child.

The moral tone of the camp had become rejuvenated. Indeed, Snub-nose, who was notoriously the most accomplished man in camp, when it came to a facile use of ungodly language, and who held that his best luck at poker and vantoon always came on the Sabbath day, promulgated a decalogue for the good of society on Sin-i-bar.

"As I hev had frequent occasion to remark, Trotty is a angel on this earth if there ever was one — a blessed little angel! It stands to reason if this here camp hez a angel, w'y, this here camp

wants to keep her. So I give it out cold that this here camp is goin' to be a fit place fer her to abide in. Consequintly, there ain't goin' to be no more cussin' in this here camp — leastways not in her presence. Fer the Good Book sez, Thou shalt not cuss. Neither thou ner thy man-servant ner the stranger within thy gates. Amen! And if any gent feels he hez a grievance, w'y, he knows where to find me, and all he needs to do is to say where he'll hev it."

. . . . . .

Summer was almost gone, and the nights held a breath of frost.

Grouped around the hearth in the cabin of Menelaus the men were smoking and playing with Trotty. Incidentally they were discussing the probability of a September snow that would choke the passes on the Denver trail.

Menelaus had grown discontented of late, and had not worked regularly. He had developed a most distressing cough, and with his physical break-down came an intense longing to resume his journey. He talked continually of making the start. He must really get out of the camp before the passes were closed by snow. He could not delay a day longer. Yes, he would yoke the oxen and start in the morning.

The men tried to divert him by building air castles of their own. The ambition of Hardpan William was to go down to Manitou. No, he would pass the winter at the Springs. He would rent the best suite of rooms at the Antlers, wear a biled shirt, smoke twenty-five-cent cigars, and live like a nabob. Reddy was divided in opinion as to whether he would winter in Old Mexico, or make a journey to the Holy Land. He would like to pass a winter, too, in Egypt, taking pains to explain to Hardpan that it was not the Egypt back in southern Illinois. Snub-nose meditated a trip back to Iowa — in disguise — for the purpose of ascertaining whether or not his old woman was there, and had yet secured a divorce.

Menelaus interrupted this exchange of confidences by requesting Reddy to weigh and value his pile of dust.

"I never was any good at figgers nohow. *She* always did the figgerin' when we was at home. . . . Ten thousand dollars! More'n I ever dreampt of havin'. She'll be clean tickled to death when she finds I've made my pile. I c'n fetch her back in style! I'll yoke up Bright and Jerry in the mornin'. I'll leave Trotty

with Snub-nose. She thinks a heap of Snub-nose, and I won't be gone longer'n spring!"

"Leave Trotty with me!" exclaimed Snub-nose, aghast.

"Shore! I c'n hurry faster, not havin' her to look after, and I'll fetch — Her — back, to right here! What do you think of that?" Menelaus smiled magnanimously at Snub-nose as if he were conferring the greatest favor possible on him. "I know you'll like Her, Snub-nose. I'll tell her all about you, and how good you've been to Trotty. I know she'll like you, Snub-nose, and I hope you'll like her, seein's we're goin' to live neighbors-like. She's an awful fine woman, Snub-nose — awful fine!"

An almost beatific smile lighted up his face as he said it.

One by one the men stole away from the cabin, and strange to relate, Snub-nose stopped at the first pine tree, kicked it viciously, and deliberately violated each word and clause of his decalogue from alpha to omega.

"I'll tell you what, boys! I'll run off with Trotty and put her in a boardin' school. See if I don't! Mennylayoos is gettin' too feeble-minded to keer fer his little Trotty any more. Talked about goin' off and leavin' her!"

But Reddy interrupted his plaint. "Snub-nose, onless you are blind and deef, you ort to see that you'll be that little gal's guardeen soon enough. By the token of that cough he's a-hangin' onto, he's booked to make a trip over the range most awful sudden, one of these days. Curi's how a feller of his formation goes when he gits a fair start!"

"I'll gamble the week's clean-up that he don't pass in his checks ontil he meets up with that old woman of his. I've knowed a few lungers myself, and with any object in livin', they do hang on most onnatcheral."

All forenoon of the next day the thunder growled and muttered back in the range. Angry clouds gathered about the crown of the great Silver Plume, poured their contents upon it and the adjacent peaks, and gathered and poured again. By all precedent it should have been a snow storm, but the Chinook had somehow escaped the vigilant eye of the weather man, and had stolen down from a thousand miles north-west to turn the scheduled snow storm into a waterspout.

Down on Sin-i-bar the sun was shining, and the men were all at work, except Menelaus. He had delayed his departure another day and was wandering in the woods, the victim of the spirit of restlessness. In the afternoon the angry voice of North Fork suddenly rose insistent on the air.

"Cloud busted some'r's on the head of North Fork," observed Snub-nose. "Lucky it warn't on the head of Sin-i-bar."

Down by the ford where Sin-i-bar and North Fork mingled their waters, Menelaus sat under a pine tree at the bend of the creek. He was watching the rapid rise of the waters, and wondering whether or not the creek would be run down enough by morning for him to be able to ford the stream.

Down the long grade on the opposite side came the up-bound stage on its weekly return trip to Denver. The overflow touched the trail at the foot of the hill. As the lead horses set foot in the water the driver set heavy heel against the brake and, with a dextrous wrench at the lines, brought the stage to a standstill so suddenly that the leaders reared on the bits. The driver rose to his feet and measured the rise of the waters with practiced eye.

Yes, he could cross. Didn't he know every inch of the road, blindfolded, in the dark? This in response to an anxious inquiry from inside in a feminine voice. And when a masculine voice supplemented her question with other questions of like tenor, the driver supplemented his former statement with other statements, couched in vigorous and picturesque words.

He knowed his bizness, he guessed. If he didn't know his bizness, who did? Tell him that. Yes, just tell him that! What the 'ell was he here fer, anyway? Tell him that, too, while you was at it! Receiving no response to the latter very pointed question, he took it that his assurances were highly satisfactory, flecked at the leaders with his whip, and drove into the shallows of the overflow, cautiously feeling his way by the crunching of the gravel.

It was very soon patent that, whatever he was there for, it was not to know that a four-foot wave was just then due from up-creek, speeding along at twenty miles an hour. The wave was upon him with a rush and a roar just as he reached mid stream. The leaders reared and plunged, the wheelers tried to swerve, and then horses, stage and driver were the playthings of North Fork.

At that instant the stage curtains were flung aside, and a gentleman with a heavy, well-trained mustache appeared, with one arm closely holding a white-faced, cowering woman. He made a leap, and desperately, but vainly, tried to swim with the current. North Fork seized them by the feet, drew them under, flung them clear of the water, caught them and drew them under again, tossed them, buffeted them, and finally, as if tiring of such puny toys, tore them asunder and flung the woman in the shallow water at the feet of Menelaus.

Half an hour later Menelaus staggered into Sin-i-bar camp with the dead woman in his arms. He was still clasping the dripping body when the men came in from work. His eyes held a strange light, and he laughed a gleeful, childish laugh when Reddy tried to relieve him of his burden.

"I told you I'd fetch her back, pardners all, and — I hev!"

He broke off into a fit of coughing. Something red trickled from his lips in a tiny stream. He sank over, and his yellow curls mingled with the tangled auburn tresses of the dead woman.

They buried them together the next morning under the pines. While the mound of red earth was being carefully patted down, Snub-nose held the weeping Trotty in his arms and tried to comfort her. He told her not to cry, for Daddy and Mammy had gone up into the sky to be angels forever and ever.

Later, he told Reddy he was going to take Trotty up to Denver and put her in the care of a good woman he knew there. The Iowa trip? Well, he had given that up. He must look after his little angel now. Seemed to him like it was his right. This became more apparent when he added reflectively, as he scraped at a splotch of red mud on his shirt-sleeve with his thumb nail:

"You saw — *Her?* Well, she war my old woman, too!"

The Sole Survivor.*

BY NATHANIEL DICKINSON.

OW Armstrong had come to the Island may be learned from the records of the Life Saving Service. Sufficient for this tale of his after doings that it was from the wreck of the *Spartacus,* and in that uncomfortable conveyance known as the breeches-buoy, which, in Armstrong's case, owing to the rolling of the wrecked steamer, had been a giant swing, now dipping him deep in the frothing breakers, now whipping him a half-hundred feet heavenward, so that, when he had been extricated from the breeches, he had been carried to a nearby farm-house and worked over for nearly an hour before he was brought painfully back to an existence which had already begun to bore him at the age of twenty-eight.

It was quite in line with Armstrong's romantic career that there should be a young and beautiful girl connected with this experience, and that it should be largely owing to her efficient care that he should find himself on his feet a month after his rescue and the pneumonia which followed it. It was out of keeping with all precedents, however, artistic as it may have been, that Armstrong should fall quite in love with the maiden, for hitherto, in the wisdom of his youth, he had denied that the claims of Cupid were anything but selfish and passing.

Now the unbelievable had become the fact. Skepticism had gone down before the undeniable. It was April, and Armstrong had quite recovered his usual good health; boats left the Island weekly, yet he showed no disposition to leave the cozy farm-house, sheltered by the rounded hills from the sweep of the winds, and but for the fact that eventually a new check-book and some clothes he had sent for were delivered, there might have been no connection at all between the Island and the mainland for him.

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Three joys he had in life now, — to eat, as he had never cared to eat before, to sleep the dreamless sleep of the Island, and to make love in the intervals to Alice Sands. Of the three he preferred the latter, which was saying much, for the Island appetite would be paradise to many a dyspeptic, and its salt-sealed sleep a heaven of rest to his insomnious brethren. But after a time he began to take these as a matter of course, while his third joy grew to be not a joy unalloyed.

For Armstrong found it no easy matter to make love to this girl. There was that in her pristine virtues which held him aloof — in the Island independence of spirit which emphasized the fact of his being an Inlander, and beyond this, in the personal equation, she was a girl of singularly masculine character; and this fact, he decided, after much deliberation, was what led her to treat him with a delightful comradeship, and nothing more, that must be done away with before he became aught but a simple friend to her. In plain words, then, it resolved itself into a demonstration of the superiority of the physical man to the physical woman, and how this could be accomplished he was quite at loss, for a month's acquaintance had shown him that Alice could drive and ride a horse, sail a boat and swim, far better than he himself.

Yet, it was not the girl alone which endeared the Island to Armstrong. He loved it for itself, for its wind-rounded hills which stood in clear outlines in the pure Island air, with their brown stone walls creeping endlessly over them and the sheep and cattle nibbling the sparse grass. He loved it for its sterner side — its frowning cliffs of clay with the virgin sand at their feet, golden where the sun fell on it, pounded hard by the everlasting seas which towered, curling in, to detonate in grand harmony on its level bed. Lastly, he loved the simple Island folk, with their ethics unfettered by conventions and their sturdy independence.

Evenings, Armstrong sat with the family in the comfortable "sitting-room," Mrs. Sands knitting or sewing, Alice reading, or writing, perhaps, and her father dozing beside the big stove. At such times Armstrong delighted to inveigle the older man into recounting the yarns of the Island, stories as salty as the sea itself, smacking of romance, often; strong and simple and original ever.

It was through him he first heard of the Great Wild Dog. On

the northern end, the Island was broken into a succession of steep bluffs and storm-cut gulleys on the sea-side, while inshore, fresh-water marshes, impenetrable of foot and overgrown with brush-growth, held the Islanders at bay. Here was the home of the animal which was to play so important a part in his life.

Two years previous to the one in which Armstrong had made his début on the Island, a Danish bark had come ashore one night in mid-winter, on the east shore. It had been an hour before the coast-guard had discovered her through the drive of snow, and some time later when his Coston had brought the life-saving crew, with mortar and line, opposite the wrecked ship.

By the time preparations had been made to send a line over the wreck her masts had gone and the seas were sweeping her in a way that made the existence of life aboard her impossible. So the keeper and surfmen had watched the terrible combers in the hope of saving some strong swimmer who might reach the breakers in one chance out of a thousand.

Only one of the surfmen had seen aught of life in the terrible seas. To him, peering into the darkness, had come a vision of an enormous head and gleaming teeth held above the froth and borne shoreward on a huge comber. This breaking and receding, a huge dog had staggered up the beach, shaking the water from him. For a moment it had stood looking out toward the wreck as though in last farewell, and then it had trotted slowly away toward the north end of the Island and straightway lost itself from the view of the astonished surfmen in the darkness of the night.

How the animal survived that winter none of the Islanders could say, but outlive it he did, for in the Spring he was seen now and then, gaunt and lean, seeking his food along the wreck-strewn beach, shunning the presence of man as though he had never known it, and retreating into the pastures of the marsh country with his approach.

Then, for a time, he had been forgotten again. But one morning, an Islander, whose farm bordered the marshland, had come across the half-eaten carcass of a lamb in his pastures, and soon from all sides came the tale of the short count, for, with the taste for blood on him, this huge Great Dane, for such he was, grew to slaughter from pure lust of killing, and such was his strength and

activity that his depredations were of a serious nature, and the Islanders had organized a party to hunt him down.

Of this entire party but one man had seen the creature, and he, taking perforce a snap-shot, had missed his mark, and missing had but added to the extraordinary cunning of the beast, for it had taught him the fear of a gun, and of those who saw him after this hunt no one had a weapon. Poison and traps were alike powerless to injure him. "That which had the man-scent he left alone in his cunning." And so he had come to be a bugbear on the Island, a name to frighten children with and a burden-bearer of all that was unexplainable.

. . . . . .

The wildness of the sea was in the air that morning. The day was lowering, the east wind swept in from the darkened sea with a strong, steady pressure as one faced it. The gulls cried and swooped low, as they do before a storm, white as the crested seas themselves, and already the surf boomed with a sullen note.

By some freak of good fortune Armstrong had persuaded Alice to walk down to the beach with him. Few and far between were those times when he could win her from her allotted tasks about the house. Yet an Islander loves to watch the sea in its might as can no Inlander, and so, together they had made their way up the path to the bluffs, he with a rifle cradled on his arm — for ever since he had heard the strange tale of the Great Wild Dog he had longed for a shot at it — until they stood overlooking the seas below.

The girl sank on the sparse grass on the cliffs-edge and Armstrong beside her. Seaward, sky met water in one vast infinity that fascinated. Rhythmic was the boom of the surf; aromatic the scent of sea-weed, torn from its hold and cast on the beach by the troubled sea. In the girl's eyes was wistfulness, in the man's, exaltation. To her it was pregnant with past dreams, — as to him, it fanned his passion by its grandeur. Her eyes rested content on the sea — his on her.

"What a beautiful blue," murmured the girl.

"Baffling description," assented Armstrong, but his eyes were on hers as he spoke.

"Oh, I love the sea," said the girl.

"And I love ——." The girl turned toward him, "the sea, too," he concluded, lamely, deploring his cowardice the while.

"Yet it is cruel, inhuman."

"Cruel, — not necessarily inhuman." She looked up inquiring.

"Some humans are cruel," he explained.

"But the sea is unconsciously cruel."

"And the humans?" Her eyes fell before the meaning in his.

"Do you mean that I am cruel?" she demanded, with Island directness.

"In a way, yes," he answered, sticking to his guns.

"In what way?"

"May I begin at the beginning?" he queried.

She nodded.

"To begin with, then, I love you," he said, gravely. Her face slowly crimsoned.

"The beginning must be the end," she said firmly.

"You are confessedly cruel," laughed Armstrong, but there was nothing of mirth in the laugh. The girl held her silence.

Armstrong's eyes, wandering gloomily seaward, dwelt upon a floating gull, cradling beyond the breakers. He raised his rifle, glanced along the sights, and the crash of the gun drowned the boom of the surf. Just beyond the gull rose a spurt of spray, the bird rose wearily from the heaving bosom of the sea and drifted away with the wind, unscathed.

"Ill luck to one who kills a gull, they say," commented Armstrong. He aimed at one farther out. Again the rifle crashed, and this one stretched its broad wings out in death. Armstrong's ill-luck came sooner than he could have guessed. The girl was on her feet instantly. Anger, and a touch, he thought, of superstition, he saw in her face. He had offended against the Island traditions, but more, he had sinned against womanly tenderness. The sea-blue eyes blazed and the brown face flushed darkly.

"If I am cruel, you are heartless," she cried, passionately. She turned from him and plunged recklessly down the path to the beach, and, reaching this in safety, made her way northward along it.

As for Armstrong, he recovered from his astonishment to smile queerly to himself. Then he swung his long legs over the cliff-

edge and took shot after shot at the gulls as long as he judged the girl in hearing.

It might have been a half hour that Armstrong sat thus in the sulks. At the end of this time his ill-temper passed, as might a cloud over the sun and, slinging the rifle over his shoulder, he set out good-humoredly after the girl.

The sea boomed at his feet, and sent the frothing brine creeping toward him over the hard sand. Above him towered the lofty cliffs, cleft here and there by the wave-cut gullies. The whole aspect of sky and sea and land was one of utter savagery, in which, for aught that was to be seen, he moved alone of all his race, for a frowning promontory had hidden the girl from sight.

The girl was in a mood to walk that day, Armstrong decided, for point after point of the curving sea-front he rounded without seeing her, and had it not been for the print of her small shoes in the hard sand he would have believed she had ascended the cliffs again by one of the gullies. And then, as he glanced ahead along this track it seemed to him that the trail had doubled. He hurried on to the spot, filled with grim foreboding. It was as he had thought, a new trail swept in from the foot of a neighborly gully, and a single glance told Armstrong that it was that of an animal, and that animal — the Great Wild Dog.

Meanwhile the girl had wandered on with her thoughts. Her sudden anger with the man had left her. After all, she could not expect in him the virtues of her own sex. Nor would she wish them. He was a man, and a masterful one. Would she have him different? And then her reserve came to her again of a sudden. What did it matter to her what he was? Why should she care that he was tall and slender and dark, unlike the sturdy, blue-eyed, fair-haired Islanders — that he was indifferent where they were importunate. Why, indeed, should she consider him at all? Yet, he was not as easily disposed of as this. A trouble had come into her young life. She felt suddenly older. She thought of his going, and looking beyond saw — the hopeless monotony of her daily life. She threw herself on the dry sand at the foot of the cliff. Now and then a sob escaped her, and then at last, her head on her arm, she fell into troubled slumber.

The booming waves wove themselves into her dreams. It

seemed to her that each was a hungry wolf with grinding teeth, that each came nearer than its predecessor, and that she was powerless to move. Then, in the horror of that nightmare, she felt a warm breath on her cheek — at last one had reached her. She uttered a low cry of terror and opened her eyes to a more terrible sight, for standing over her, hunger in its fierce eyes, its lips drawn back to show each fang, its ears erect as those of a wolf, was the most monstrous and savage creature she had ever seen.

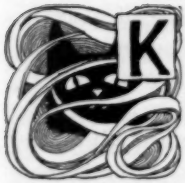
She sprang to her feet, the fear of death in her eyes, and the beast retreated a step in doubt. The girl looked wildly about her. The cliffs? It would catch her before she had gone a rod up them. There was but the sea, and she sprang toward it down the beach. For a moment the huge wild dog watched her, his cruel eyes measuring the distance, — playing with her as a cat with a mouse, — then he leaped after her.

One despairing glance the girl cast over her shoulder, and at the sight her strength left her and she sank to the sand. Then, as she waited an eternity to feel those white fangs at her throat, there came the nearby crash of a rifle, a huge shadow flitted over her, and on the wet sand beyond her she saw the monstrous dog struggling convulsively in its death agony.

When Armstrong reached her side with his smoking rifle, he found her hysterical, shaking like a leaf in the wind. He lifted her to her feet and she clung to him as might a child, her arms about his neck and her flushed and terror-stricken face on his breast, and, like a child he comforted her. He seated himself on the sand with his back to a boulder and the dead beast hidden from sight, smoothed back her truant hair, stroked her forehead, and called her every endearing name that came to his tongue in his joy at having saved her. As for her, she clung to him without a word, clung as though she meant never to let him go. He was strong and could protect her, her faith in herself was gone, and in its place was dependence — and love.

The Reign of King Leo.*

BY DENNIS H. STOVALL.



ING, be a good boy till I return. Am going down to the club for a smoke and a game of pool." Markley stroked the panther on the thick, furry neck, and closed the door of its box. Then he donned his coat and hat and left the office.

Markley was a timber cruiser, and his business carried him frequently into the Coast Mountain forests. During one of his cruises into the primeval he came upon an old panther and cub. For his own safety he was obliged to shoot the old one. He dropped the cub into a canvas bag, which he swung to his saddle and brought down to the Pass.

The young panther grew and waxed fat. He took his warmed milk from a bottle, first by the pint, and soon by the quart. He ranged at will through Markley's suite of office rooms, and nothing pleased him better than to lie stretched at full length on one end of the table, while his master wrote letters at the other.

He was early given the name of "King Leo," or just "King," for convenience. At the end of a year King was a full-grown panther, powerful as any mountain lion of the Coast Range, and as playful and docile as a kitten. But he had an unpleasant habit of pouncing playfully upon every visitor to Markley's office. It usually resulted in seating the visitor unceremoniously on the carpet. While it was King's method of welcoming guests, there were many who objected.

Hence, to prevent a complete paralysis of business, Markley was finally obliged to chain King during the day, keeping him out on the flat roof of an adjoining building till night. Then he would bring him in, and the two would romp and roll about over the floor. It was great sport for Markley.

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Just across the hall from Markley's rooms was the office of Tom Fetterly, whose hobby was goats, — registered, high-bred goats — with pedigrees that reached all the way from the Swiss mountains to Oregon. On the night that King was locked in his box, while his master played pool at the club, a high-priced, fancy goat was sleeping peacefully just across the hall.

Fetterly had found a buyer for his goat down in the Sacramento Valley, and, as the animal was to be shipped that night, he gave the expressman a key to the office door, for Fetterly, too, was one of those who played pool at the club.

An hour before the ten o'clock Overland arrived, the delivery-man and an assistant groped down the long, dark hall and finally found a keyhole and a lock which responded to Fetterly's key, and from the black darkness dragged a box to the express office, where it was set on the scales to be weighed and entered on the route book, and tipped the beam at just one hundred and eighty pounds.

"He's the heaviest goat that ever grew whiskers," one man remarked, as he glanced at the scales.

"No wonder we got tired, Mike," the other replied. "I would have taken the wagon round if I had known the blamed goat was as big as a yearling calf."

"It's a good thing Tom Fetterly don't have to pay the charges," said the expressman, as he stuck the big red tag of the express company on the box.

Just then there came a rumble from within, and two feet of tail protruded through an opening.

The expressmen gasped. "Mike, did you see that?" one exclaimed. "Two feet of tail! Six inches is enough for any goat. I believe we have a cow here."

He essayed to make an examination of the animal inside, but was deterred by a remark from his partner: "Cow, your granny! Don't you s'pose I know a fancy goat's tail when I see it? Goats are made nowadays with tails long enough to whip off flies."

When Preston, the express messenger, received the box, read the shipping directions, and essayed to comply with the request to give "an ample feed of hay two hours before delivery," he said unprintable things.

"A thing like this ought to go in a cattle car," he declared. "I

hit my bunk in half an hour, and I won't turn out at four in the morning to feed no blamed billy goat! You lunch now, Billy, or not at all!"

Pulling a big wisp of hay from a bale, he thrust it through an opening in the box. "Here, Billy, wake up!"

At the fourth jab of Preston's stick, a roar came from the box, which trembled as if a small tornado were raging within. The messenger made five long backward steps and suffered five varieties of fear in as many seconds.

Then came a second and much louder roar, a crash of splintered wood, and the box flew apart like an eggshell when the hatched chick steps out.

There, in the full light of the car, his great head held aloft, his long tail swishing uneasily, his wide jaws apart, and his sleek sides heaving with his quick breath, stood King Leo. For the first time he felt the tingle of the hot blood of combat. The thrill that urged his fathers to battle and to death leaped through his veins, and King was the monarch that for ages had ruled supreme among the wild things of the mountain crags through which he, the last of a long line of monarchs, was now being sped on an express train.

Preston quickly sought refuge behind a stack of apple boxes, piled nearly to the ceiling at the rear end of the car. At the other end, just over his bunk, were his rifle and revolver; but the panther stood between.

It was clearly evident to the messenger that something was going to happen. The panther would undoubtedly put an end to him, the oldest, and — he had hoped — the most faithful messenger in the Great Western's employ. It looked to Preston as a pretty rough termination for an honorable career.

King eyed the messenger suspiciously, as if inclined to believe him responsible for the whole miserable blunder. He stalked down the car, lifted himself to his haunches and sniffed the apple boxes. When he crouched as if to leap, Preston drew his knife, determined to die hard.

But King suddenly changed his mind and, turning, strode majestically toward the other end. The messenger gave a long sigh of relief.

When the panther reached the farther end of the car, the train came to an abrupt stop, with all brakes set. At the same instant there was a loud pounding on the side door of the express, the shouts of deep-voiced men, and a rattle of pistol shots.

"Open up here!" commanded a voice at the door. Both the messenger and the panther were silent to the command.

"Open up, and be quick about it or we'll dynamite the car!"

Preston understood. The train was in the hands of highwaymen. The robbers were after the express money, and were, no doubt, aware of the big shipment of gold in the safe. It dawned upon him that the panther was in the plot. It was an ingenious scheme to get him off his guard.

"Open the door!" the voice commanded a third time. Then followed a low murmur of preparation, the scratch of a match on the car wall, and the scurrying of heavy feet. In a moment there was a terrific crash, the flying of splintered timber and broken iron, a confusion of express packages and bundles, and the dense smoke of burned powder.

Louder and more terrible than the explosion of the dynamite was the roar of King. Wounded and bruised, he raged up and down from end to end of the car. Preston was madly endeavoring to extricate himself from beneath the pile of apple boxes.

A ragged hole was blown in the car, and through this a voice of command came: "Toss out the money box or we'll come in after it!"

A messenger's sworn duty is to protect the treasure entrusted to him. The bronze badge on Preston's jacket was proof that he had been tried and was not found wanting. The knowledge that the express safe was in danger drove all fear of the panther from the messenger's mind. He squirmed from beneath the heap of boxes and waded through the litter of packages and bundles to the front end of the car. Midway he passed King, but the great cat was too intent upon the hole in the car to notice Preston.

"Crawl in, Bill," said a voice, and a masked face appeared through the hole. King leaped across the car and struck with both paws at the intruder. There was a howl of pain, and the man dropped heavily from the hole. King crouched to one side, roaring madly.

Preston found his rifle and stuck the barrel through the iron barred window. Two men were standing near the train, popping their revolvers promiscuously to keep curious heads inside car windows. The messenger leveled his rifle and fired three shots. Again King roared as he furiously awaited the second appearance of the masked face.

But it did not appear. The reception given the one man who was rash enough to attempt an entrance was not desired by any of his comrades. Confused by the roar of the unknown monster and the rifle fire from the window, the robbers retreated in haste down the embankment, carrying the wounded man between them. Mounting their horses, the entire band dashed away, with a wild clatter of hoofs, down the cañon.

The messenger clambered out the window and closed the bars behind him, just as the conductor came rushing forward excitedly.

"You did nobly, Preston," said the train chief admiringly. "The company owes you another bronze tag."

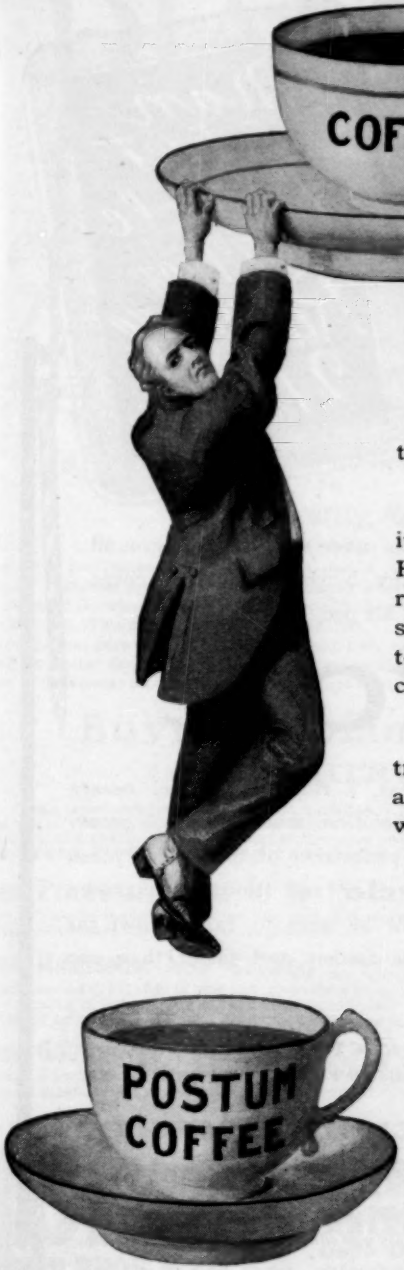
"They don't owe it to me — hear that?" the messenger replied as King emitted an angry roar.

"My God, what is it?" the conductor gasped.

"It's a lion," said the messenger. "He's as big as an elephant and has a voice like the bass end of a caliope — Put 'im on board the train for a goat. It was he that stood off the gang. Get back in the car? Not me. I think I'll take the rear Pullman."

At Redding the conductor received a message from Markley. "My pet panther was put aboard tonight's Overland by mistake," the message said. "Hold till I arrive."

"Please hurry," the conductor wired in return, "we need the car."



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